

## IS RELIGION A FEELING OF DEPENDENCE?

BY THE EDITOR.

WHILE the Bible declares that man is made in the image of God, anthropologists claim that Gods are made in the image of man; and we do not hesitate to say that there is a truth in both statements. The fact is that man, a sentient, rational, and aspiring being, has originated somehow: the world appears as a chaos, yet man's mind is such as to enable him to become the framer and shaper of his own destiny. His rationality makes it possible that he can pursue a purpose, make designs, execute plans. Other things are at the mercy of circumstances. So he was before he acquired his mentality and is to some extent still, for his knowledge of facts is inchoative and in many fields purely tentative. But whenever he is familiar with the situation, he is able to marshal affairs and build his fate himself; and recognising the laws of existence he can, instead of being crushed by the forces of nature, use them for his own enhancement. By adapting himself to the world he practically becomes an embodiment of the factors of rationality and thus realises the ideal of what religiously has been called an incarnation of God. His reason reflects the logic of facts, his conscience the moral order of the cosmos his religion the sentiment of the glory of the whole.

We define God as that which makes man and is still leading him on and upward. Yet while man is thus the incarnation of that which is divine in nature, rendering manifest the latent spirituality of the universe, we shall find that every man's conception of God is a measure of his own stature. He pictures God according to his comprehension, and thus it is natural that every man has a different notion of God, every one's God being characteristic of his mental and moral caliber. The god of savages is a bloodthirsty chieftain; the god of sentimentalists is a good old papa; the god of the superstitious is a magician and a trickster; the god of the slave

is a tyrannical master ; the god of the egotist is an ego-world-soul ; and the gods of the wise, of the just, of the free, of the courageous are wisdom, justice, freedom, and courage.

This difference of the God idea according to the character of the man explains the paradox that what is God to one may be Satan to another. Thus Schleiermacher, a learned and thoughtful man but of a weak constitution, physically as well as spiritually, still bows down in submissive awe before a God whom he conceived most probably after the model of the Prussian government and defines religion as the "feeling of absolute dependence."

Poor Schleiermacher ! What an abominable religion didst thou preach in spite of thy philosophical caution which, in the eyes of zealous believers, amounted to heresy !

It is worth while to criticise Schleiermacher's definition of religion, because it found favor with many people, especially in liberal circles ; for it appealed to the free religious people as a definition which omitted the name of God and retained the substance of religion. Would it not be better to retain the name of God and purify its significance, than to discard the word and retain the substance and source of the old superstitions ? But it is an old experience that the Liberals are iconoclasts of external formalities and idolators of reactionary thoughts. They retain the cause of obstruction, and discard some of its indifferent results, in which it happens to find expression. They cure the symptoms of the disease but are very zealous in extolling its cause as the source of all that is good.

Schopenhauer said in comment upon Schleiermacher's definition, that if religion be the feeling of absolute dependence, the most religious animal would not be man, but the cur.

To the lovers of freedom the feeling of dependence is a curse, and Sasha Schneider has well pictured it as a terrible monster whose prey are the weak—those whose religion is absolute submissiveness. (See our Frontispiece.)

Truly if we cannot have a religion which makes us free and independent, let us discard religion ! Religion must be in accord not only with morality but also with philosophy ; not only with justice, but also with science ; not only with order, but also with freedom.

Man is dependent upon innumerable conditions of his life ; yet his aspiration is not to be satisfied with the consciousness of his plight ; his aspiration is to become independent and to become more and more the master of his destiny. If religion is the expres-

sion of that which constitutes the humanity of man, Schleiermacher's definition is wrong and misleading, for religion is the very opposite. Religion is that which makes man more of a man, which develops his faculties and allows him more independence.

We must only learn that independence cannot be gained by a rebellion against the constitution of the universe, or by inverting the laws of life and evolution, but by comprehending them and adapting ourselves to the world in which we live. By a recognition of the truth, which must be acquired by painstaking investigation and by accepting the truth as our maxim of conduct, man rises to the height of self-determination, of dominion over the forces of nature, of freedom. It is the truth that makes us free.

So long as the truth is something foreign to us, we speak of obedience to the truth; but when we have learned to identify ourselves with truth, the moral ought ceases to be a tyrannical power above us, and we feel ourselves as its representatives; it changes into aspirations in us. True religion is love of truth, and being such it will not end in a feeling of dependence, but reap the fruit of truth, which is liberty, freedom, independence.